

Wycombe Wanderers 2, St. Albans City 1

WITH 85 minutes gone, Tuesday night's Isthmian League encounter seemed to be heading for an inevitable draw at 1-1. Wycombe Wanderers then brought on substitute Tony Amos, who with only his second touch of the ball, sent it blazing past goalkeeper Doug Parkin for a spectacular winner.

England International Amos, the target of much criticism since his arrival from Slough Town two months ago, won a free kick about 28 yards from the St. Albans goal, with three minutes remaining. He took three paces back and promptly crashed home a glorious left foot drive to earn two fortunate points for the Blues.

Until that moment, Wycombe had struggled for much of the game against a hard working but very mediocre Saints outfit, whose last point came from their 1-1 draw with Wanderers at Clarence Park, on September 12.

The changes from the side on Saturday did not work out as planned. Rob Williams failed to impress out of position at full back and one would have thought Dave Bullock, who has played only 45 minutes of football in the last three months, would have been given a run out. Johnny Hutchinson's switch to the front line from midfield didn't work out either. But Mick Holfield's inclusion was justified with a goal and although new signing Keith Jameson had a quiet debut, he made some telling passes in the later stages.

NEW FACES

There were several new faces in the Saints' side too. Ex-Slough John Hobbs made an impressive debut in the back four while Delroy Rhoden scored an excellent goal—his second against Wycombe this season. Rhoden's skill in screen-

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ing the ball caused the Wycombe defence many problems but the West Indian front-runner found little support from his colleagues.

Former Wanderer Bernie Bremer arrived too late for the game and his place was taken by the hard working Dave Webb.

Things went well for the home side early on with Alan Gane instigating many neat attacks. An early chance was almost turned into goal by Holfield after Searle had put Hutchinson through. Hutchinson beat the Saints offside trap a minute later but Parkin tipped his shot around the post.

Gane's willingness to shoot on sight brought a new weapon in Wycombe's armament, and having played for three consecutive matches, his confidence seems to be growing.

St. Albans presented John Maskell with precious few wor-

ries in the first half hour, their only chance engineered by Rhoden and falling to Tony Brothers, who shot narrowly over the top after 24 minutes.

But Wycombe themselves were also finding it hard to find a way through a small but lively back four. The home defence tended to be too casual with both Derek Gamblin and John Delaney guilty of badly misplaced passes.

Their opening goal brought the game to life after 31 minutes when newly signed John Lamb, who played in Oxford City's 8-0 humiliation by Wycombe, gave away a free kick on the right. Larry Pritchard sent a deep cross into the area where Mick Holfield leapt high at the far post and sent a curling header into the far corner, wide of Parkin.

BRILLIANT

After Hutchinson had brought a competent save from the

keeper, St. Albans scored a brilliant equaliser in the 36th minute. John Delaney slipped when challenged by Webb, who put the ball through to Rhoden 30 yards out. He made ground before looking up and thumping in a dipping piledriver past Maskell for his second goal against the Blues this season, having scored in Walthamstow's 2-0 win on September 2.

It was just the tonic the Saints needed and they began to put together some precise and flowing moves in the last ten minutes. On the stroke of half-time Brothers shot frantically wide after a half clearance from Olson. A goal at that stage could have turned the match and put Wanderers under severe pressure.

Wanderers' inability to take chances, which cost them dearly at Walton on Saturday, was evident again soon after the interval. Jameson and Holfield

were both at fault, Holfield beating the goalkeeper but sending his shot too high from a narrow angle.

Keith Searle brought a fine save from Parkin after 53 minutes when Pritchard's nod-on saw the centre forward blast in a cracking left foot shot which the 'keeper palmed over at full stretch for a corner.

But again after a promising opening to the half, Wycombe fell away. It was obvious that they were the superior side, but they never really asserted their authority on the game. One unusual factor in their play was the number of passes that went astray. Normally this is one of the Blues' best features but it was certainly lacking on Tuesday.

There were some close shaves in the later stages as Wanderers pressed for the winner and after 75 minutes Holfield, put through by Searle, batted past two defenders and put in a shot under pressure. The ball beat Parkin but struck the upright.

Delaney and Pritchard both went close with headers but Wycombe were unable to maintain concerted pressure on the visitors and for a time it looked as though St. Albans might steal both points with another goal.

Wycombe manager Brian Lee then brought on Amos for Gane with five minutes remaining. While many were still debating the decision to bring on a player for such a short time, Amos produced his thunderbolt to turn the moans into cheers!

S.E.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: Maskell, R. Williams, D. Gamblin, G. Olson, J. Delaney, A. Gane (sub. A. Amos 85 mins.), M. Holfield, L. Pritchard, K. Searle, J. Hutchinson, K. Jameson.

ST. ALBANS CITY: D. Parkin, D. Hodgwood, J. Lamb, J. Hobbs, C. Clark, M. Howkins, A. Brothers, D. Webb (sub. J. Dixon 65 mins.), R. Butler, P. McGillicuddy, D. Rhoden.

Referee: P. E. F. Knock (Oxford).

Half-time: 1-1. **Goalscorers:** Wycombe — Holfield 35, Amos 87; St. Albans — Rhoden 36.

Attendance: 1,084.